

**Sustain Mid Maine Coalition  
Climate Change Public Policy Team  
Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 2014**

Meeting started at about 6:35 p.m. at the Winslow Public Library.

Members present: Tom Tietenberg, Dick Thomas, Ernie Grolimund, and Jane Edwards. Elery Keene and Peter Garrett arrived late, a little after 6:50.

**Minutes**

Motion was made by Tom, seconded by Dick, to approve the minutes of the last meeting of the team (January 14, 2014) with one change. The change was to remove the word health in the next to last paragraph.

Vote was unanimously approved.

**Reports of activities by team members since the last meeting.**

Tom talked about solar energy related legislation being considered by the Energy, utilities, and Technology committee. There are 2 bills under consideration that relate to solar energy. LD 1252 relates to restoring rebates for installation of solar panels. LD 1652 is intended to boost solar development in Maine, which is lagging behind other New England states. The bill would establish a vision and policy framework to guide Maine, and establishes specific goals for solar development. It also directs the Public Utilities Commission to do a detailed analysis of the implementation of solar development in Maine.

This may require changes in law relating to the fact that solar electricity can only be generated when the sun shines. This will often be in excess of what the generator needs and this excess will be sent into the grid, usually during the time of day when there is greatest demand. The grid will need to direct this to other places where energy is needed. When the sun is not shining, electric energy from other sources (hydro, natural gas, petroleum, coal, or wind) may need to be directed to the owners of solar panels. This will probably require some changes to the way the grid functions. There are also concerns about unpreventable damage to segments of the grid such as wires or transformers. These issues bring up questions of how to adjust and maintain the grid and how to pay for the cost of doing that.

Plans for how to best handle this are also needed. This study is to be completed by January, 2015 for consideration by the next session of the legislature.

Tom reminded everyone present that most of our legislators – Colleen Lahovics, Cathy Nadeau, Tom Longstaff, and Henry Beck will be present at the Waterville City Hall on February 25 from 5:30 to 7:00 for discussion of legislation with their constituents. It would be good if we could be a part of that.

Jane indicated that she had agreed with Peter that she would monitor the legislative committee on Transportation for our team now, because Peter is very busy with some local projects.

Jane mentioned attending the Legislative Environment Committee hearing on mining regulations, opposing the current DEP version of proposed rules. Peter mentioned that he had testified also on these proposed rules, saying that the proposed mining would take sulfides from the ground when mining for the metals they are seeking at the Bald Mountain site and other locations in Maine. The proposed methods for treating this serious source of pollution are not adequate and will certainly pollute both ground water and surface water, sooner or later.

Peter talked about transportation saying that “Complete Streets” are needed throughout the state. This means streets with safe accommodation for bicycles, pedestrians, and the disabled.

Ernie said that he will be meeting soon with Federal EPA officials in Boston to talk about wood burning and climate change.

There will be a presentation at Colby about climate change in March. One of us will verify the date and time and share this with the rest of the team.

Jane said that there will be an all day meeting at the Augusta Civic Center on March 12, 2014 sponsored by 350 Maine. Members of our team may be interested in participating.

There was a brief discussion of what activities the group wanted to focus on. Jane discussed the origins of the team at the SMMC annual meeting in January 2013. In the following weeks Jane, Dick, Elery and others decided to propose the idea of creating such a team and what it would do to the SMMC Board of Directors. Among the proposed activities was a desire to monitor bills being considered by the legislature that relate to climate change issues, and work with legislators with respect to them. It was also proposed to relate to our local communities about climate change issues. The Board of Directors approved these activities.

Jane said that the original idea of the team was to emphasize attention on the legislature while it was in session, and wondered whether members of the team wanted to continue doing that. It was agreed by team members that they did want to do that.

Dick said that it may be that some of TIF money can be used to help fund an information program for homeowners and business owners about how to weatherize their homes and how best to heat their homes with consideration to cost and minimal impact toward putting additional carbon dioxide into the air that would accelerate climate change. Possibly some of the things that our team has written and is writing about use of wood stove could be made available in this way. Possibly these writings could be given out as handouts at various public gatherings as well.

### **Wood Burning**

The group proceeded to a discussion of the paper about wood burning, which Dick and Ernie had been writing. Dick passed around a more recent paper that he had written dated February 23, 2014. He would like to get comments on it before the next meeting. Peter Garrett is very interested in this.

Dick said that towns would be getting some TIF money because of the natural gas lines that are being built. Members were not clear how a TIF program works so Elery gave a synopsis of this.

Municipalities will be eligible for TIF money because they value of the natural gas pipelines being built is considered to be taxable property. This will be increased revenue for the municipalities. There is an advantage to using a TIF so as to avoid reduction in the state revenue sharing money given to municipalities and public schools for the purposed of reducing the property taxes that property owners pay. Municipalities want to take advantage of this, and can do so for up to ten years. Municipalities are considering using some of this TIF money to fund a program to advise properties about how to save money by weatherizing homes and businesses and choosing the best way to heat their buildings.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be March 24 at 6:30 p.m. at the Winslow Library.

Submitted by Elery Keene and Jane Edwards